

Message Text

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SUBJECT: DECREE ON DONBASS COAL HAS ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL
SIGNIFICANCE

REF: MOSCOW 0464

1. SUMMARY. DECREE OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, SUMMARIZED IN CENTRAL PRESS FEBRUARY 10, POINTS OUT SERIOUS SHORTCOMINGS IN COAL PRODUCTION IN DONETSK BASIN AND CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE REMEDIAL ACTION TO PERMIT ACHIEVEMENT OF 1980 PRODUCTION GOAL OF 231-33 MILLION TONS OF COAL. DECREE UNDERLINES SIGNIFICANCE OF COAL IN MEETING FUTURE USSR ENERGY NEEDS. IT ALSO IMPLIES THAT THE RECENT PURGE OF THE DONETSK OBLAST PARTY ORGANIZATION MAY HAVE INVOLVED A COMPROMISE. END SUMMARY.

2. CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND USSR COUNCIL OF MINISTERS DECREE , "MEASURES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COAL INDUSTRY IN THE DONETSK BASIN IN 1976-80" WAS SUMMARIZED IN CENTRAL PRESS FEBRUARY 10. COMPLIMENTS WERE EXTENDED FOR OVERFULFILLING COAL EXTRACTION GOALS DURING NINTH FIVE YEAR PLAN BUT
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"SERIOUS SHORTCOMINGS" WERE NOTED IN MINE CONSTRUCTION

AND RECONSTRUCTION, ACHIEVEMENT OF PLANNED INDICES IN MINES AND ENRICHMENT PLANTS, AND UTILIZATION OF LATEST TECHNOLOGY. CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF UKRAINIAN COMMUNIST PARTY, THE ROSTOV OBKOM OF CPSU, COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE UKRAINIAN SSR, USSR MINISTRY OF COAL, AND UKRAINIAN MINISTRY OF COAL WERE SPECIFICALLY TASKED WITH CORRECTING THE SHORTCOMINGS.

3. AMONG ASSIGNMENTS WHICH ARE TO BE SHARED WITH OTHER RELEVANT MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS ARE FOLLOWING: INCREASE MINING AND REFINING CAPACITY BY SPEEDING UP CONSTRUCTION OF NEW MINES AND RECONSTRUCTION OF EXISTING MINES AND ENRICHMENT PLANTS; IMPROVE RELIABILITY AND QUALITY OF COAL MINING EQUIPMENT; INTRODUCE LATEST TECHNIQUES, MECHANIZATION, AND AUTOMATION OF PRODUCTION; ALLOCATE "SIGNIFICANT CAPITAL INVESTMENT" AND PROVIDE SPECIAL EQUIPMENT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FACILITIES AND RE-EQUIPPING OF EXISTING PLANTS WHICH PRODUCE COAL MINING EQUIPMENT; IMPROVE SAFETY CONDITIONS IN MINES AND LIVING CONDITIONS FOR WORKERS; IMPROVE LABOR PRODUCTIVITY; AND CONDUCT NECESSARY PROSPECTING AND GEOLOGICAL WORK, PARTICULARLY FOR COKING COAL AND ANTHRACITE. USSR GOSPLAN, USSR MINISTRY OF COAL, RSFSR COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND UKRAINIAN COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WERE THEN OBLIGATED TO "TAKE INTO ACCOUNT" IN DRAFT PLANS IN YEARS 1977-80 LEVELS OF INVESTMENT NECESSARY TO ACCOMPLISH THESE TASKS.

4. SPECIFIC TARGETS ARE PRODUCTION OF 231-33 MILLION TONS OF COAL BY 1980 AND 245-50 MILLION TONS BY 1985. DURING 1976-80, COAL EXTRACTION CAPACITY IS TO BE INCREASED BY INTRODUCTION OF NEW AND RE-CONSTRUCTION OF EXISTING MINES AT A LEVEL OF 28 MILLION TONS PER YEAR, AND BY INITIATION OF CONSTRUCTION AND RE-CONSTRUCTION OF MINES WITH A CAPACITY OF 18 MILLION TONS PER YEAR.

5. COMPANION DECREE ISSUED SAME DAY PROVIDES FOR TRANSFER OF MINERS WORKING UNDERGROUND IN EXISTING COAL AND SHALE MINES AND AT SIMILAR MINING PROJECTS WITH ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT WORKING CONDITIONS, OVER TO A 30 HOUR WORK WEEK AND MINING FOREMEN ENGAGED IN UNDERGROUND WORK IN MINES OVER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO A 35 HOUR WEEK. THERE WERE ALSO PROVISIONS FOR INCREASED BONUSES FOR LENGTH OF SERVICE AND FOR 10 PERCENT INCREASE IN WAGES FOR MINERS.

6. THE DECREE FOLLOWS BY ONE MONTH REMOVAL OF DONETSK OBLAST PARTY BOSS, DEGTYAREV (SEE REFTEL). IT MAY SHED LIGHT ON REPORTED DISPUTE IN UKRAINE BETWEEN SHCHERBITSKY AND LEADERS IN DONETSK POLITICAL FACTION OVER INVESTMENT FUNDS FOR DONETSK.

(SEE FBIS TRENDS JANUARY 21). DECREE APPARENTLY ATTEMPTS TO REDRESS GRIEVANCES OF DONETSK GROUP BY ORDERING AN INCREASE IN INVESTMENT THERE.

7. COMMENT: FROM ALL INDICATIONS, COAL WILL PLAY AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE IN MEETING SOVIET ENERGY DEMANDS FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE. NEW DECREE IS SIGNIFICANT NOT ONLY FOR HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED INCREMENTS IN COAL PRODUCTION AND APPARENT DETERMINATION TO ALLOCATE NECESSARY INVESTMENT RESOURCES, BUT ALSO FOR REITERATING LIST OF PROBLEMS WHICH NOW SEEM COMMON FOR VIRTUALLY ALL SOVIET ENERGY PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES. ON POLITICAL SIDE, WHILE SHCHERBITSKY WAS ABLE TO REMOVE A POWERFUL OPPONENT FROM UKRAINIAN LEADERSHIP, HIS REPORTED OPPOSITION TO ADDITIONAL INVESTMENTS IN DONETSK WAS APPARENTLY NOT SUPPORTED. WE BELIEVE THIS DECREE, COUPLED WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF KACHURA (A MAN NOT IDENTIFIED WITH SHCHERBITSKY IN PAST) AS NEW FIRST SECRETARY IN DONETSK, MAY INDICATE THAT DONETSK AFFAIR MAY HAVE BEEN SETTLED BY A COMPROMISE WHICH, IN EFFECT, LIMITED SHCHERBITSKY'S VICTORY. END COMMENT.
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